

American energy workers are doing their part. It is time for Democrats in Washington to start doing theirs. Instead, Democrats seem to be taking actions that are going to make this Biden energy crisis and high-energy prices even worse.

Last year, Joe Biden proposed more than a dozen tax increases on American energy. A bipartisan majority in this body—in the U.S. Senate—blocked the tax increases from ever becoming law. Now Democrats are trying to raise taxes on American energy again—again.

There is a bill in this Senate right now to raise taxes on American energy and then send out government checks. That is a bill that is going to make inflation worse. And, by the way, inflation is already at a 40-year high. People are suffering under the inflation like they haven't in a long, long time. Paychecks are not keeping up. People are feeling the pain.

I heard it at the grocery store in Casper, WY, on Sunday; heard it at the airport in Casper, WY, on Monday.

The Democrat's bill will do nothing to increase the supply of energy. In fact, higher taxes would only decrease the supply. Government checks would increase energy demand. You put the two together, it is an inflation nightmare.

Other Democrats have proposed a pause on the gas tax, saying that might actually lower the price a little bit—not much, a little bit. Oh, the ones who cosponsored this, they are all running for election this year, and the plan, of course, is to put the gas tax back in place right after the election.

The gas tax is what is used to pay for work on Federal roads and highways. It is called the highway trust fund. It is how we fund these. I chair the Environment and Public Works Committee, bipartisan work with Senator CARPER. We know how the funding goes to build the highways, the roads, and the infrastructure of this Nation. That is part of it. It is a gimmick.

Even Democratic economist Larry Summers called the idea—I called it a gimmick; he called it “goofy and gimmicky.” This is Larry Summers.

Other Democrats in the House are asking Joe Biden to declare a climate emergency. They want him to tighten his choke hold on American energy production. It is going to drive up prices even more. It is going to drive supply down and prices up. But not one of the ideas that the Democrats are proposing will actually bring down the cost of energy for American families who are struggling today under the inflation of Joe Biden and the Democrats' policies. Not one of their ideas would increase the supply of American energy. So the contrast could not be clearer.

The debate in this country today is a debate between the Biden blame game and American energy production. It is a debate between climate elitists and working families. It is a debate be-

tween Democratic gimmicks and Republican solutions.

The only solution, the real solution to the high energy prices is more supply, and the supply is more American energy. It is not going to Iran; it is not going to Venezuela; it is American energy supply. We have the resources. We have the expertise. We have the workers. We have the energy in the ground. The Biden administration and the Democrats will not let us get it out of the ground. The solution is for Joe Biden and the Democrats to get out of the way so we can get American energy out of the ground, and it can be used here at home in America.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter to the President, the morning after the State of the Union Address. I sent it along with every Republican who serves on the Energy Committee. I am the ranking member of that committee. We sent President Biden a to-do list, 10 action items that he could take today to restore American energy dominance—because we were energy dominant the day he came into office, and we are now energy dependent. That is how you get such an increase in gas prices and the pain at the pump for the American people.

Step 1 is to open up our Federal lands to energy production. The President ought to auction off leases right away, and he has a lot of catching up to do. He should also approve the 4,600 drilling permits that are today stuck in limbo and stop putting barriers to pipelines and infrastructure that are used to move oil and gas to market.

Our Nation is an energy superpower. It is time we began to act like that again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I just wanted to take a few moments to respond to some of the remarks made by my colleague from Wyoming.

I think we all saw a jump in big gas prices when Putin invaded Ukraine. Then this body called upon the President, in a bipartisan manner, to say that we don't want to import any Russian oil into the United States because we don't want our dollars going to Putin to help fund his war. That was the right thing to do. That also increases gas prices.

We also know that there are thousands of leases on public lands that are not being used today and drilled by oil companies that have those leases. In fact, the Senator from Massachusetts, the Presiding Officer, has said we should have a law saying use it or lose it. And I support that position because instead of using it, you see oil companies exploiting the current situation to have windfall profits and use those profits not to reinvest in war production but to engage in stock buybacks to help their CEOs while they keep the prices high.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, I am here today on the floor as we mark day 27 of Vladimir

Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine.

Each day that the war grinds on, Putin's brutality exceeds the last. As his advances against major cities like Kyiv have slowed, his barbaric war crimes have mounted. Americans have seen the harrowing images of Russian strikes hitting schools, hospitals, maternity wards, and designated humanitarian quarters, indiscriminately killing children, women, and men.

The horror of each day is amplified by the fact that this is not a war of necessity. This is a war of choice, a war chosen by Vladimir Putin. And that choice grew out of Putin's fear of democracy, his fear of freedom of expression.

Just today, Putin's crony court sentenced Russian democracy activist Alexey Navalny to 9 years in a maximum security prison. First, they tried to poison Navalny; now they want to silence him with 9 more years in jail.

So you see the lengths to which Putin is willing to go to silence one man. You can imagine how he fears a democracy of 44 million Ukrainians on his border. He is scared of the example it sets to the Russians that he keeps under his authoritarian thumb. He wants to extinguish—snuff out—the flame of liberty in Ukraine before it catches fire in Russia.

So he started a war, a brutal war. Now, Vladimir Putin has shown the world who he really is: a scared tyrant who thinks he can snuff out democracy and freedom by brute force. But he is wrong. He can kill a lot of people, and he has; but whether it is a matter of weeks or many months, Putin will not be able to kill the aspirations of the people of Ukraine. We see proof of that fact every day in the defiant words and heroic actions of Ukrainians everywhere.

Amidst the horror, the blood, and the misery, we have seen amazing strength. The people of Ukraine are fighting for their homeland, for their freedom, and for the power to control their own destiny. Ukrainian men and women of all backgrounds and ages have joined in this cause, blocking the path of Russian tanks with their bodies, making Molotov cocktails, tending to the wounded, and taking up arms. Their courage speaks to the very best of the human spirit.

Like most Americans, I am deeply inspired by their resolve and their fortitude, and the whole world should learn from their determination because the stakes in this war go far beyond the borders of Ukraine. This is a fight for the future of democracy itself.

As President Zelenskyy said in his address to Congress last week:

Russia has attacked not just us, not just our land, not just our cities. It went on a brutal offensive against our values . . . against our freedom, against our right to live freely in our own country, choosing our own future—against our desire for happiness, against our national dreams—just like the same dreams you have, you Americans.

That was President Zelenskyy last week before Congress. He spoke of self-

determination. He spoke of individual liberty and freedom. Those are values enshrined in America's own founding documents.

So Putin is not just trying to take over Ukraine; he is, as President Zelenskyy said, trying to destroy the notions of democracy and freedom that we hold dear. Putin wants to see freedom fade and democracy fail, and he is not alone in that effort.

Just before the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Putin traveled to China and met with another autocratic leader, President Xi Jinping. Putin and Xi signed an agreement stating that relations between Russia and China had "no limits," "no limits." On that day, they formed a pact of autocracy. And, today, China's state-run media parrots Putin's lies as Russian tanks encircle Ukrainian towns.

President Xi is watching closely to see if Putin's model of autocracy by conquest might work in other places, might work in Asia. China has already violated its international obligations by stomping out freedoms in Hong Kong. Now, the Chinese Communist Party is eyeing their own democratic neighbor, Taiwan. As Beijing weighs the risks of trying to forcefully unite Taiwan with mainland China, its leaders are monitoring Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and they are watching closely how we and the world respond.

Mr. President, the good news is the United States has rallied our NATO allies and partners in Europe. Even partners beyond the West have responded with unity and resolve, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Singapore. One hundred forty-one countries voted at the United Nations to condemn Putin's war.

Support has come not only in words and votes but also in deeds and help. Last week, President Biden signed the \$14 billion emergency Ukraine legislation passed by the Senate and the House. The United States, our NATO partners, and others are supplying Ukrainians with the weapons they need to fight Putin's army. We are providing millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Romania, and other neighboring countries with humanitarian assistance, and we are delivering aid to the millions more displaced within Ukraine itself.

The United States has also worked in concert with our allies to unleash sweeping, punishing sanctions at a speed the world has never seen; and these sanctions are aimed right at the heart of Russia's economy, at Vladimir Putin, and at his cronies. We have cut off Russia's financial system from the world. The ruble is in shambles. The ill-gotten gains of the oligarchs are being seized at this very moment.

The unity we see today among democracies in the face of Putin's aggression marks a double triumph. Not only does it allow us to form a united front against Putin, it also undermines his strategy of weakening democracies. He

has long conspired to erode support for NATO from within its member countries. He believes freedom means unending chaos, and he wants to see us bicker ourselves into oblivion. When NATO and our key democratic allies are divided, Putin and authoritarians can win. When we are united, we win.

When it comes to Putin and Russia, Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have known this for years. Even when the former President attacked NATO and belittled our democratic partnerships, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle united to reaffirm our support for the alliance. In 2018, a bipartisan group of Senators reestablished the NATO Observer Group to keep an open line of communication with our NATO partners. I am proud to be a member of that group.

In 2019, the Senate passed a resolution reaffirming our support for NATO in the face of the former President's attacks. That same year, Speaker PELOSI invited NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg to address a joint meeting of Congress. She did that on behalf of a bipartisan group. That was the first-ever such address by a NATO Secretary General.

President Biden pledged that he would strengthen that tradition of unity, rebuild U.S. relations with our allies, and stand up for democracy, and that is what he has done. On day 1, he got to work repairing our tattered alliances after the beating they took during the last administration. He organized the first of two summits for democracy last December to rally global partners, and the Biden State Department organized dozens of diplomatic missions to countries around the world to foster democracy.

So let's be clear: This speedy, severe, and synchronized response from the United States and our partners did not come about by chance. It wasn't random. Our unity came from the deliberate strategy of this President and his administration. President Biden understands that there is a global contest between autocrats like Putin and Xi, who want democracy to die, and those like Zelenskyy, who want it to flourish; and he has shown that democratic unity is the strongest instrument we have against the forces of autocracy.

Mr. President, that unity was on full display in February when I traveled to the Munich Security Conference with a bipartisan group of lawmakers from both the House and the Senate. We met in Munich on the eve of Putin's invasion. And because President Biden had the foresight to share our intelligence about Putin's intentions with the world, NATO, the European community, and members of the G-7 had time to prepare and coordinate our response. It allowed us to plan the rapid delivery of weapons and the imposition of unified, crushing sanctions—unity in action.

I hope we can maintain that unity of purpose here at home. There was, as the Presiding Officer knows, a time in

American life when politics stopped at the water's edge. I realize that era is for the most part over, but I hope—I hope this country is strong enough and wise enough to put aside our politics at least for the purpose of making common cause to support democracy and stand up against Putin, as long as it takes.

That unity will be tested. I already see divisions in Congress over the administration's response to this invasion. Sometimes Members of the Senate or the House will have an idea to help Ukraine or an idea to punish Putin that they want implemented immediately. I often have the same impulse. But let's be clear: The success of the President's strategy has been the rapid coordination of our steps with our allies, whenever possible. That is how we pack the biggest punch.

There are also some measures where the President has asked for immediate action and Congress has delayed. Five days ago, the House of Representatives passed a bill to strip Russia of its most-favored-nation trading status. It passed 424 to 8. When is the last time we saw a vote like that in the House of Representatives?

That bill is sitting right here in the Senate right now. We should and could pass it today. We should certainly pass it before President Biden leaves Wednesday—tomorrow—to meet with NATO allies and leaders from the European Union and G-7.

Sometimes around here, if the President announces a sanctions measure a day after somebody else thinks about it, he gets criticized for it being too late; but here, the Senate has been sitting for days on the House bill, and every day that goes by is another day that Russian producers and exporters make more money, make more dollars. Every day that goes by provides some relief to Putin's cronies and the Russian economy. So let's stand together in this Senate and act on that legislation now.

I also appeal to my colleagues—especially on the Republican side—to speak out against those here at home who are spreading Putin's propaganda. A case in point has been the fast-spreading lie that the United States and Ukraine have bio labs in Ukraine to help develop bioweapons. That is just flatout false, but that lie has been fueled in part by some in the rightwing media.

On March 3, the Kremlin circulated a memo to Russian media saying it is "essential" to feature Tucker Carlson, who has been spreading this kind of misinformation about Putin's war on his show. The lie about the so-called American and Ukrainian bioweapons labs was also picked up and peddled by China's state media.

So, Mr. President, all of us should stand up and speak out against this misinformation. American media figures can say what they want. That is their right. But so can we as Members of Congress, and I would argue we have a duty to make our voices heard and

join in the chorus of those calling out Russian lies across the globe.

Every day, we see thousands of Russians flood the streets, from St. Petersburg to Siberia, to protest Putin's war. The world witnessed Russian journalist Marina Ovsyannikova speak out against the invasion on live, state-sponsored TV, with a sign calling out Putin's lies.

These heroes are carrying on knowing full well the risk that they put themselves in, the risk that they will be thrown in jail or worse. The least we can do in Congress is to stand up to lies here at home that aid and abet Putin's propaganda machine.

Make no mistake, even in unity, there will be spirited debate here. We will have disagreements over how to best respond to Putin's aggression, but we should never ever disagree about who the true enemy is. Vladimir Putin is to blame for this attack on democracy. Vladimir Putin is to blame for death and destruction in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin is the enemy—not one another; not the other party; not the President.

There are plenty of things for us to fight about, but in the current battle for democracy and freedom in Ukraine and the larger fight for democracy and freedom around the world, the stakes are simply too high for us to fall back on partisan games. Let's come together. Let's stay together. And if we do, I am confident that democracy and justice will prevail.

To those countries and leaders around the world who stand on the sidelines, I say that neutrality in the face of evil is complicity. In the end, freedom and the dignity of the human spirit will prevail over subjugation and oppression every single time. They need to get on the right side of history.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, before I start my remarks in regard to the 2-year anniversary of the CARES Act, I just want to compliment my colleague from Maryland on his statements in regard to Mr. Putin's aggression in Ukraine.

Everything he said I totally concur in—the unity that President Biden has been able to instill not only among our traditional allies but the global community; the strength of our help to the Ukrainian people, the help that we have given in regard to humanitarian relief; and the sanctions that were led by the United States—but we now have global support for many of these sanctions, which are making a difference.

This is clearly a battle between good and evil, and I just really wanted to compliment my colleague from Maryland on his statement, one on which I hope all of us agree, and that we can move forward very quickly on the legislation you refer to that passed the House of Representatives that would make it clear that we will not do business with Russia as normal; that we

will revoke the favored nation status and normal trade relations; and that we will do what Mr. Zelenskyy has asked us to do, and that is to make it clear that the Magnitsky sanctions, which are individual sanctions imposed against the perpetrators, Mr. Putin and his enablers in Russia, will be maintained with reauthorization of the global Magnitsky statute.

I hope we will get to that as early as this week because I agree with my colleague that every day we delay it, in fact, is helping Mr. Putin. We need to make it clear and enact that statute, which, by the way, the Biden administration strongly encourages us to do.

CARES ACT

Mr. President, 2 years ago, the United States declared COVID-19 a national emergency. By then, it was clear that we were experiencing a once-in-a-century pandemic and that preventing the spread of this dangerous virus would require our Nation's greatest collective effort since World War II. Here in the U.S. Congress, we knew that this era-defining challenge would require unprecedented action from the Federal Government to confront the economic and public health crisis created by COVID-19.

The pandemic has waxed and waned in the 2 years since then, so opportunities for American families and small business owners to return to their normal lives have come in fits and starts. But one lesson that has remained true through these ups and downs and has been confirmed on multiple occasions through the pandemic is that the U.S. Federal Government can—it must—play a role in solving our Nation's longstanding, difficult, and intractable problems.

Let us remember those first few weeks of the pandemic. The vast majority of Americans did not know what to make of the Centers for Disease Control's January report of a novel virus, the coronavirus identified abroad. By mid-February, small business owners were already feeling the effects of reduced revenues. By the end of February, the U.S. economy was rapidly deepening into a recession. There were severe disruptions in domestic and global supply chains, leading to shortages in food and critical personal protective equipment, and the unemployment rate was increasing rapidly.

Congress had to act and act fast, so that is exactly what we did. We passed the CARES act—a bold, unprecedented, and comprehensive \$2.2 trillion COVID relief package that met the scale of the crisis we faced—and we did it without partisan rancor or political infighting. The bill passed the Senate 97 to 0. It is one of the greatest acts of bipartisanship I have witnessed during my career in politics.

The CARES Act provided funding to our public health infrastructure for testing, tracing, and vaccine development. It directed funds to State and local governments that were straining under the cost of the pandemic. It also

authorized the Treasury Department to get stimulus payments to American families and increased unemployment payments because we knew that millions of Americans would be unable to work as we came together to slow the spread of the virus.

The bill also provided hundreds of billions of dollars to support our Nation's small businesses. I was proud to lead bipartisan negotiations on the small business provisions of this bill on the Small Business Task Force, which included myself and Senators JEANNE SHAHEEN, MARCO RUBIO, and SUSAN COLLINS.

As we negotiated these provisions, we had several key facts in mind. First, small businesses have low profit margins and carry little in cash reserves, so they could only survive a few weeks of a closure without some form of support. Secondly, eventually, Americans unable to work would return to work, and it is much easier and quicker for small businesses to reopen with their existing staff instead of hiring new staff. Third, keeping small businesses in operation would make our eventual recovery come about more quickly and much more robustly. So we wanted to keep small businesses afloat. We wanted to keep their employees employed. We wanted to keep our economy moving forward.

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, which predates the pandemic, had already been approved to provide loans to small businesses harmed by COVID-19. So we knew that small businesses would have access to the long-term capital they needed to adapt their businesses and make other investments.

EIDL can meet small businesses' long-term capital needs, but we knew that we had to move quickly to meet the immediate capital needs of these businesses, so we created the EIDL Advance Grant Program to send \$10,000 grants to small businesses that applied for EIDL.

We knew how important it was to a recovery to keep employees on payroll, so we created the Paycheck Protection Program to provide small businesses with loans worth up to \$10 million to cover the cost of up to 8 weeks of payroll, and we made a promise to borrowers to forgive the loans as long as they used the funds for payroll or other allowable expenses.

We created a debt relief program to cover all costs associated with new and existing SBA loans for 6 months. We invested in the SBA entrepreneurship development programs to hire experts and increase capacity to help small businesses navigate the ups and downs of the pandemic.

In total, the CARES Act included more than \$375 billion in aid to small businesses. The aid could not have come soon enough. The initial \$349 billion in PPP funds were exhausted in less than 2 weeks. SBA approved more than 1.6 million loans in that time.

SBA's laudable efforts to deliver relief to small businesses also came with